

City Council Introduction: Monday, June 7, 2004
**Joint Public Hearing of the Lincoln City Council
and Lancaster County Board of Commissioners:**
Tuesday, June 15, 2004, 4:00 p.m.

Bill No. 04R-140

FACTSHEET

TITLE: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 04019, by the Director of Planning, to amend the Lincoln/Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan to add text and a map on Capitol View Corridors; and to add text on Urban Design, public art, and the Urban Design Committee.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval.

SPONSOR: Planning Department

BOARD/COMMITTEE: Planning Commission
Public Hearing: 05/19/04
Administrative Action: 05/19/04

RECOMMENDATION: Approval (6-0: Carlson Marvin, Taylor, Carroll, Krieser and Bills-Strand voting 'yes'; Larson, Sunderman and Pearson absent).

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The staff recommendation of approval is based upon the "Comprehensive Plan Implications" as set forth on p.2, concluding that Lincoln and Lancaster County maintain and enhance their reputation as an attractive, well-planned place with its own unique character.
2. The minutes of the Planning Commission hearing and action are found on p.5.
3. The record consists of communications from the Chair of the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission, the Executive Director of the Lincoln Arts Council, and the Downtown Lincoln Association in support (p.8-12).
4. There was no testimony in opposition.
5. On May 19, 2004, the Planning Commission agreed with the staff recommendation and voted 6-0 to recommend approval.

FACTSHEET PREPARED BY: Jean L. Walker

DATE: June 1, 2004

REVIEWED BY: _____

DATE: June 1, 2004

REFERENCE NUMBER: FS\CC\2004\CPA.04019

2004 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ANNUAL REVIEW

Comprehensive Plan Amendment No. 04019

April 28, 2004

Urban Design and Public Art

Applicant	Location	Proposal
Director of Planning	Community wide	Add text and map on Capitol View Corridors and text on Urban Design, public art and Urban Design Committee
Recommendation: Approval.		

Description

The Lincoln/Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan has traditionally articulated goals for enhancing and preserving the distinctive character of our community, including strategies in historic preservation, protection of the Capitol environs and vistas, and urban design. The current Comprehensive Plan should be strengthened in these areas by emphasizing the benefits available through public arts programs, community design review, and protection of crucial Capitol vistas.

The proposed text addresses these topics as well as proposing restoration to the Plan of the Capitol View Corridors maps, included in the 1994 plan but omitted in the interest of brevity from the current Plan. Since Chapter 27.56 of Lincoln Municipal Code (“Capitol Environs District”) provides certain protection for Capitol environs and views, the Plan should establish the community vision which the code implements.

Other portions of this proposal encourage all units of local government to avail themselves of the free advice offered by the City’s Urban Design Committee, and urges that public art considerations be included at the earliest (and most economical) point in public design projects.

Comprehensive Plan Implications

The proposed additional text and map strengthen the existing sections and language of the Plan, which state:

“Quality of Life Assets

Preservation and enhancement of the many quality of life assets within the community continues. For a true “good quality of life,” a community has more than jobs, shelter, utilities and roads - there are numerous service, education, historic and cultural resources which are fundamental to enriching lives. (Page F 15)

Preserve and enhance entryway corridors into Lincoln and Capitol View Corridors. (F 19)

General Principles for All Commercial and Industrial Uses

– shall be located ... so that they enhance entryways or public way corridors, when developing adjacent to these corridors.” (F 38)

Conclusion

Lincoln and Lancaster County have a competitive edge to the degree that they maintain and enhance their reputation as an attractive, clean, well-planned place. Both private and public efforts are important in this arena but public example and leadership are essential. Furthermore, requiring design review of private projects, without setting a high standard in public construction, is unproductive and creates ill-will.

Recommendation

Strengthen urban design principles in Comprehensive Plan by adding the following language:

Amend the Comprehensive Plan as follows:

1. Add to “Future Conditions: Community Form,” after all the “Guiding Principles for the Urban Environment” as a new section on page F19:

“Urban Design and Public Art

The American cities generally regarded as especially attractive, such as Charleston, Boston, San Francisco, Savannah, and New Orleans, are older communities with a strong sense of cohesiveness and space. These cities had the advantage that distinctive parts of their fabrics were constructed in previous eras where there were fewer building materials and techniques available, and stronger architectural traditions. In Lincoln, Haymarket and several older neighborhoods demonstrate similar cohesiveness. Today, technology offers much more variety in building materials and techniques. Many contemporary buildings are thought of as “products” that have a more limited economic life. The automobile has generated huge new space and functional demands. All of these factors make it more difficult for communities today to develop and redevelop in an attractive, cohesive manner.

Most cities, including Lincoln, protect their cultural/architectural heritage through formal historic preservation efforts. Lincoln has taken further steps to protect and promote a positive physical character through special design requirements that protect the environs and views of the State Capitol Building—our community’s signature urban design asset--and that encourage compatible infill in its older neighborhoods. The Capitol Environs Commission is unique in that its membership includes city and state appointees, and its authority extends to all public and private projects within its district, including State projects. Its authority to identify and project important public vistas to the Capitol should be strengthened.”

2. Insert after page F 19 the Capitol View Corridors maps for the City and County as shown on the exhibits at the end of report.
3. Add to “Future Conditions: Community Facilities”, on page F 129, a new preface as follows:

“Urban Design

City government uses the volunteer advisory services of an Urban Design Committee (UDC). This is a group of design professionals and interested citizens appointed by the Mayor with the approval of the City Council. The Committee is charged with advising the Mayor, City Council, Planning Commission, city boards, and city departments on the design of city buildings and other public projects, major public/private developments, and any private projects constructed on city right of way or other city property. The Committee’s intent is to make sure that new public facilities are exemplary – that they provide functional and aesthetically pleasing facilities for the public, and model good design for the private sector. The Commission also works to publicize and reward good design, private as well as public, through an annual awards program.

The benefits of this free advice would be strengthened by including all public projects under UDC review, just as the Environs Commission reviews projects of all local and state governmental units. LES has brought projects to UDC, and Lincoln Public Schools has used the committee's input on siting communication towers. But the Public Building Commission, which provides facilities for City and County government, does not currently benefit by UDC review, although it is the major developer of local government buildings. Lancaster County, the Railroad Safety Transportation District, the Airport Authority, and other units of local government could all utilize this experienced volunteer board.

Public Art:

Cities also can strengthen their sense of place and positive image through promotion of artworks in public places. The Lincoln Arts Council demonstrated the power of public art through its invigorating "Tour de Lincoln" project and is promoting a downtown "art corridor" on 12th Street. The Arts Council may expand its activities in the future to assist with public art plans for downtown, Antelope Valley, and the city's key entryways.

Lincoln also would improve the design of its public buildings and facilities, and expand its inventory of public artworks, by an early integration of the efforts of artists with architects and engineers on future projects. Cities like Seattle and Phoenix are more interesting places, with a stronger sense of local pride and identity, as a result of their efforts to integrate art in the design of many public construction projects. Most public facilities in Lincoln have been designed without opportunities for artistic expression, or with art added only as an afterthought. Local government should include artists on the design teams for major construction projects from the conceptual stage, and budget to incorporate artistic expression."

Prepared by
Ed Zimmer
Planning Department, (402) 441-6360: ezimmer@ci.lincoln.ne.us

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 04019,

PUBLIC HEARING BEFORE PLANNING COMMISSION:

May 19, 2004

Members present: Carlson, Marvin, Taylor, Carroll, Krieser and Bills-Strand; Larson, Sunderman and Pearson absent.

Staff recommendation: Approval.

Proponents

1. Ed Zimmer of the **Planning Department** submitted three letters in support from the Downtown Lincoln Association, the Capitol Environs Commission and Lincoln Arts Council.

Zimmer explained that there are three or four concepts in this proposed language. The first sets the scene and tries to correct an omission or perhaps excessive streamlining of the past Comprehensive Plan, where the map that showed the Capitol View Corridors was not in the Plan and we would like to put that back in; there is also language urging fuller utilization of the Urban Design Committee which renders citizen advice on design matters to public bodies; and the amendment proposes to set a higher standard for public projects in the promotion of artworks in public places.

There was no testimony in opposition.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION BY PLANNING COMMISSION:

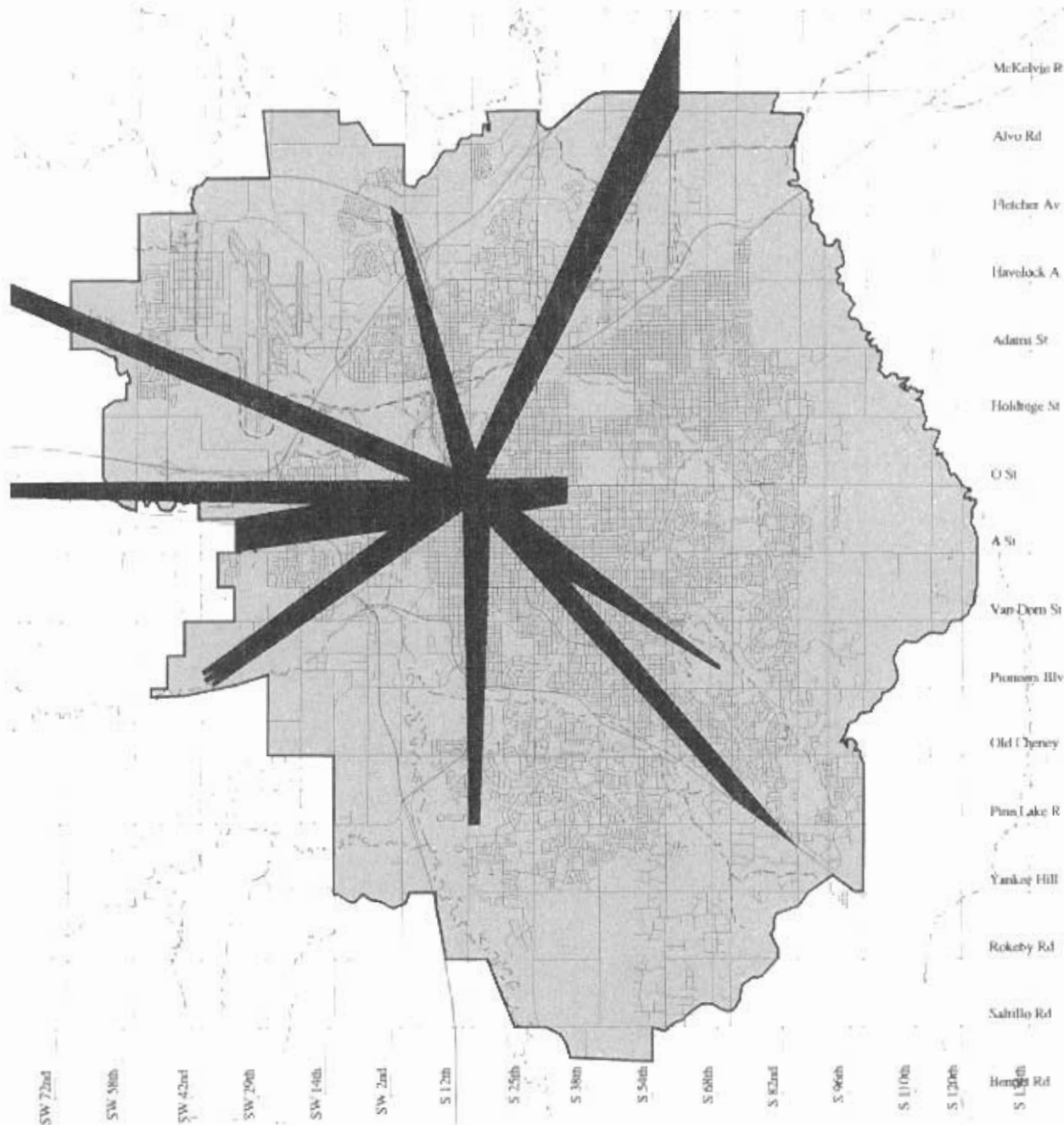
May 19, 2004

Carroll moved approval, seconded by Carlson.

Carlson stated that this is the definite direction he has been pushing in terms of historic preservation and urban design. We are lucky to have an attractive city and he wants to make sure we keep pushing in that direction.



Carroll believes that the Capitol View corridor is important to protect and he wants to protect the urban design around it.

Motion for approval carried 6-0: Carlson, Marvin, Taylor, Carroll, Krieser and Bills-Strand voting 'yes'; Larson, Sunderman and Pearson absent.



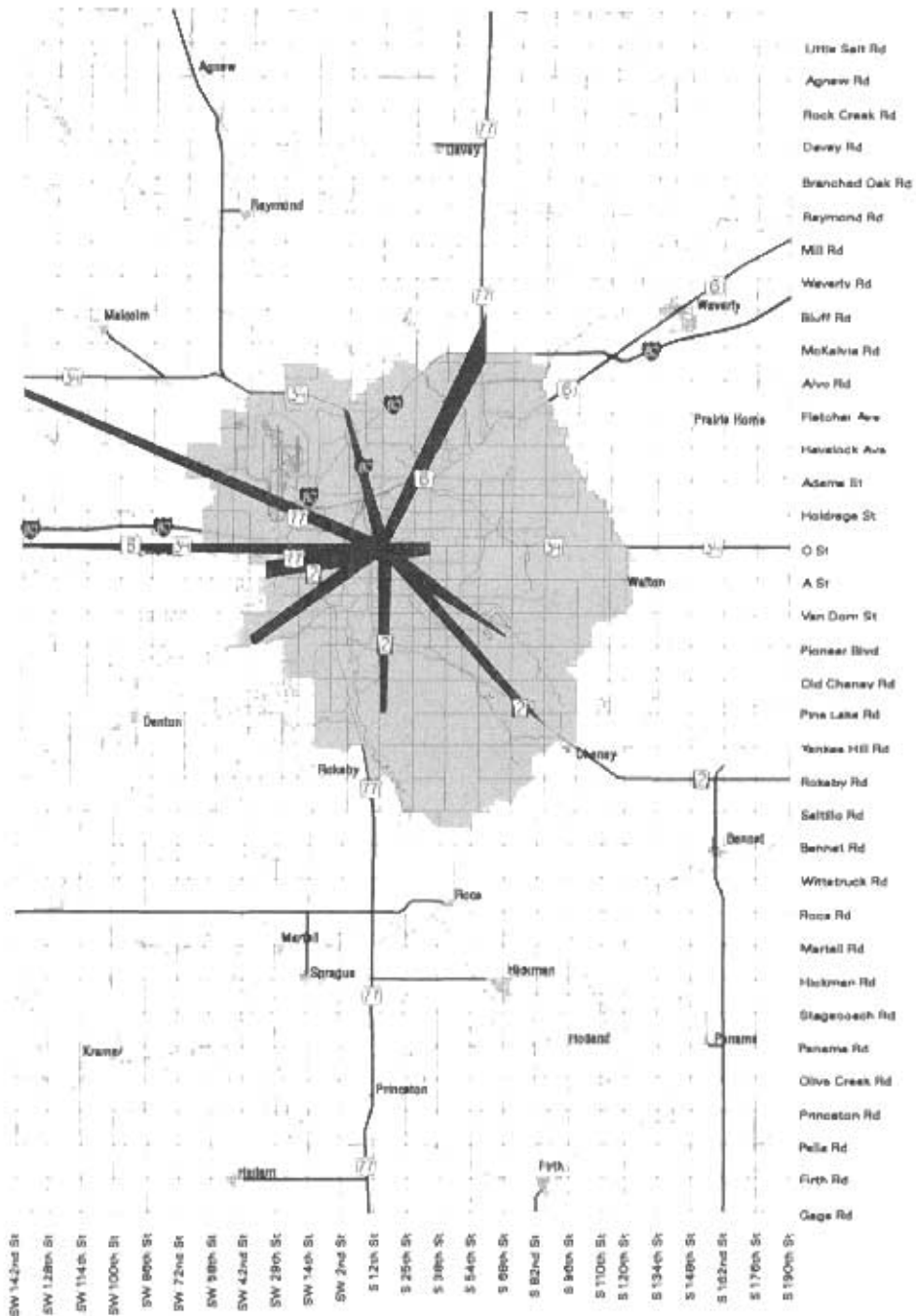
Capitol View Corridors: City Perspective

Proposed Amendment # 04019

-  Capitol View Corridors
-  Future Service Limit



006




Capitol View Corridors: County Perspective

Proposed Amendment # 19

- Capitol View Corridors
- Future Service Limit



007

 Edward Zimmer

05/18/2004 03:01 PM

To: Jean L Walker/Notes@Notes, Marvin S Krout/Notes@Notes
cc:
Subject: Nebraska Capitol View Corridors

Re Comp Plan Amendment 04019

----- Forwarded by Edward Zimmer/Notes on 05/18/2004 03:00 PM -----



"Jeff Searcy"
<jeff@searcyteam.com>
>

05/18/2004 03:04 PM

To: <EZimmer@cl.lincoln.ne.us>
cc:
Subject: Nebraska Capitol View Corridors

Marvin Krout
Ed Zimmer

I was happy to learn of the Planning Commission's effort to enhance and recommit to the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission's goal of protecting the Capitol's view corridors. The treasured vistas are not only of historic significance, but also will serve our community and state as our Capital City grows into the future.

As Chair of the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission, I applaud your department's position on behalf of all Nebraskans who love and respect the grandeur of Bertram Goodhue's masterpiece, the Nebraska State Capitol Building and its adjoining Malls.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of additional assistance in this worthy objective.
Sincerely,

Jeff Searcy

HOME Real Estate
225 N Cotner Blvd
Lincoln, NE 68505
402-475-5555 (o)
402-430-7978 (c)
www.searcyteam.com

IN SUPPORT

ITEM NO. 14: COMP PLAN AMENDMENT 04019
(p.121 - Public Hearing - 5/19/04)



Jean L. Walker

05/19/2004 12:17 PM

To: Jean L. Walker/Notes@Notes
cc:
Subject: letter of support

----- Forwarded by Edward Zimmer/Notes on 05/19/2004 12:09 PM -----



"Deb Weber"
<lacdirector@artscene.
org>

05/19/2004 11:28 AM

To: <EZimmer@ci.lincoln.ne.us>
cc:
Subject: letter of support and I will be there around 2

May 19, 2004

Marvin Krout
Ed Zimmer
Planning Commission
555 South 10th, Room 213
Lincoln, NE 68508

Dear Ed and Marvin,

I am writing on behalf of the Lincoln Arts Council, in support of Comprehensive Plan Amendment No. 04019 which would emphasize the benefits available through public arts programs.

The Lincoln Arts Council has long been the City's partner in public art endeavors. We welcome an opportunity to continue and to strengthen this relationship through the kinds of initiatives and public policies called for in Comprehensive Plan Amendment No. 04019. We can help identify artists experience in public arts projects. The LAC continually advocates for and educates about the value of public art in our community's life. We believe that public art: engages a community and helps to create a sense of place that adds to our vibrancy and vitality.

In our current Strategic Plan we have multiple strategies that address our desire to become stronger partners with the City and our hope to have artists involved in planning processes. Your amendment is a great first step in the process! We seek to develop a partnership with the city regarding future fundraising proposals and other fundraising efforts for public art and art related activities.

Thank you for this win/win opportunity!

Sincerely,

Deb Weber
Executive Director

Deb Weber
Executive Director
Lincoln Arts Council
920 O Street
Lincoln, NE 68508
402.434.2787 phone 402.434.2788 fax
402.440.9357 cell



May 17, 2004

Mary Bills-Strand, Chair
Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Commission
555 South 10th Street
Lincoln, NE 68508

Dear Mary and Commission Members,

I am writing to express support for proposed amendment #04019 in conjunction with the annual update of the Comprehensive Plan, especially the section which would strengthen the urban design review process for public buildings. Urban design review and standards have long been an important component in public-private redevelopment projects in the downtown area.

Furthermore, a number of recent downtown projects undertaken by private businesses and developers reflect a commitment to go beyond minimum design standards to produce buildings which significantly enhance their environments. The Journal Star Printing Press facility at 8th & "Q" and the One Landmark Center building on Lincoln Mall are prime examples of this. Likewise, the City of Lincoln's commitment to design excellence is evident in the Haymarket Garage at 9th and "Q" Street, recipient of the Lincoln Arts Council's 2003 Larry Enersen Urban Design Award.

A number of downtown stakeholders have expressed concern that the new City-County garage at 10th & "K" was apparently not subject to the same urban design review process and standards that public-private developments must follow. This creates the perception that a "double standard" exists, with at least some public sector projects not being held to the same design guidelines that private developers must follow.

In recent years, there has been a heightened interest across the country in quality design and aesthetics. Enclosed is a January, 2004 Omaha World Herald article describing the efforts of a new civic group, "Omaha by Design", to make Omaha more visually appealing. The broad goals of this initiative include enforceable design standards for all public buildings.

The proposed amendment to the Comprehensive Plan you are considering will hopefully ensure that consistent design standards and a design review process will be applied to future public buildings as well as private. Please incorporate this amendment into the plan in conjunction with the annual update.

Sincerely,

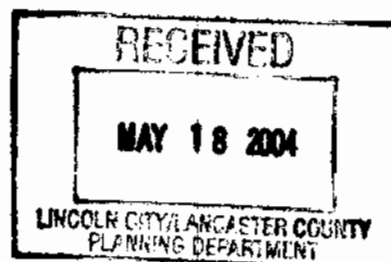
Polly McMullen

PM:pas

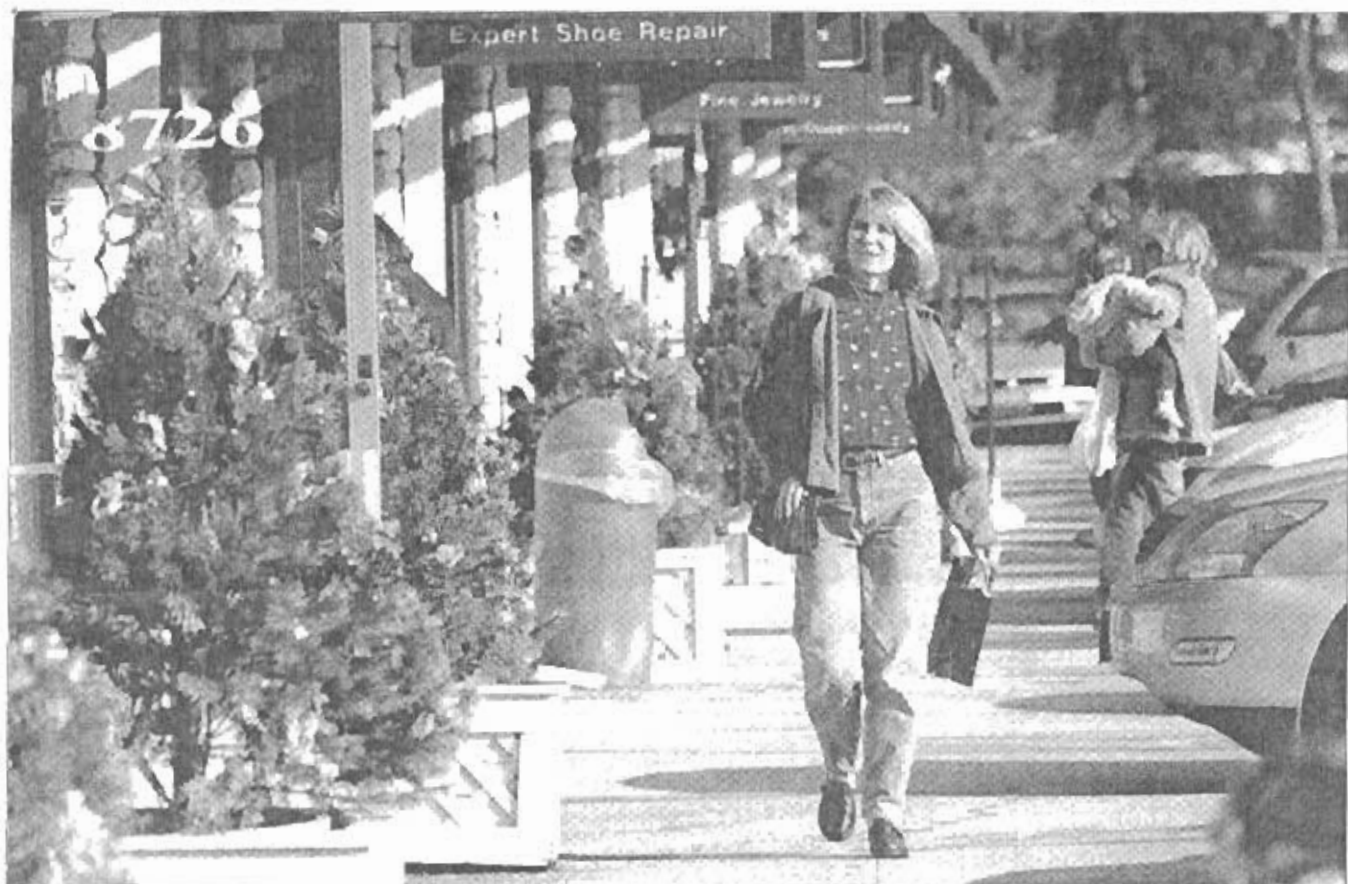
CC: Marvin Krout - Planning Director

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010



Dawn Schweitz of Oconomowoc, Wis., shops at Countryside Village on Friday while in Omaha to visit family. The shopping center, with its neighborhood atmosphere, is an example of what urban planners would like to see more of in the city.

'A new vision for the city'

Green space, civic life, neighborhoods are focus

By JEFFREY ROBB

WORLD HERALD STAFF WRITER

Countryside Village calls to Lori Schroeder.

She goes mostly for coffee. But it's also often her stop for flowers, a few groceries or a baby gift.

"It has an atmosphere like a neighborhood," said Schroeder, who lives a couple of miles from the shopping center at 87th and Pacific Streets. "Every small shop, you walk in and people recognize you. It's comfortable."

The 50-year-old center is Omaha's oldest. And for urban design and user appeal, it is considered one of the best.

Although quaint shops are a lure, the shopping center's design also feeds the attraction, urban planners say. Its buildings are grouped, not laid out in a line. Parking is by shop doors. Traffic moves slowly. The result feels a lot like a Main Street.

This is the kind of place Omaha

Omaha By Design



By Design loves.

Omaha By Design is the new initiative that wants to make Omaha visually appealing. It wants to create "a sense of place" with "welcoming environments," a city

The new urban design initiative wants to make Omaha more beautiful. It has these three, broad goals.

Green space: More trails and boulevards, streams, open space and landscaping. Public meeting Feb. 18

Civic life: Enforceable design standards for shopping centers, public buildings, landmarks and scenic views. Public meeting March 31

Neighborhood: New guidelines for redevelopment in older neighborhoods and for new developments like this subdivision near 153rd and Fort, at left. Public meeting, April 28

Meetings begin at 6:30 p.m. at the Scott Conference Center, 6450 Pine St.

with "continuity" and "contrast." It wants to regulate beauty.

With government, community and corporate interests in support, Omaha By Design is now figuring See Design: Page 2



Coming this week

In a weekly series starting Tuesday,

The World-Herald will explore the possibilities, examine what works and what doesn't, and outline the stakes.

OWH
1-18-04

110

Design: Green space is one focal point for panel

Continued from Page 1

out which tangible steps would turn an amorphous vision into real appeal and character.

Steps such as lighting landscapes, as St. Cecilia Cathedral is now. Or planting trees along streets, as Omaha used to do. Or building shopping centers that feel more like Countryside Village.

The list of possibilities is long and will be refined with Omaha's help.

"In the end, they will all add up to a new vision for the city," said Jonathan Barnett, Omaha's urban planning consultant.

Omaha By Design's goals will fall into three broad categories — green space, civic life and neighborhoods.

The green goals involve trails and boulevards, streams, open space and lots of landscaping. Omaha set a standard in the late 1800s and early 1900s with east Omaha boulevards such as Turner, Happy Hollow and Fontenelle. While new suburban boulevards are in the works, the gap spanning Omaha's middle could get attention.

Shopping centers, public

buildings, landmarks, even scenic views fall into the civic category. The neighborhood goals would address shortcomings in both old and new parts of town.

The initiative can take many of its cues from Omaha's own experience, although it will look at examples in other cities, too.

"We probably have it here," said Martin Janousek, an architect who serves on the Omaha By Design review committee. "We just haven't appreciated it, or we haven't seen it, even though it may be right in front of us."

Many of the recommendations will involve more money.

The committee is pondering whether Omaha should put more into the design of its public buildings, as the federal government did on the Hruska Courthouse, to pay for aesthetic appeal in addition to utility.

Omaha By Design also is studying ways to turn the city's streams into a system of greenways for the community, using Tulsa, Okla., as a model.

Some recommendations would be simple — such as lighting landmarks, preserving historic structures or landscaping

along streets and freeways. Others would be complicated — such as setting new development standards for commercial centers.

Omaha planning consultant Marty Shukert, who sits on the review committee, said Omaha should aim for centers where people take in things on foot.

That involves creating places people can go without a traffic hassle. Buildings on a site wouldn't be disconnected or isolated. Parking could be dispersed, not a vast sea. Customers could use a sidewalk.

Those traits are rare in Omaha now.

And they are tougher to achieve than simply regulating the look of mega-retail buildings — the issue that brought Omaha's urban design effort to the fore.

Omaha By Design stems from community objections to the initial bland designs for stores going on the Avaya plant's front lawn along I. Street between 120th and 132nd Streets. Now building appearance is only one potential new rule.

The Dundee business district

is one example of what urban planners like Shukert said the area is welcoming because it works for pedestrians.

Omaha neighborhoods also will become an Omaha By Design focal point.

Barnett, the planning consultant, said Omaha can work on the housing stock in older neighborhoods, while connecting newer neighborhoods to retail spots, making them walkable and fostering open space. New neighborhoods might offer different kinds of houses, doing away with cookie-cutter design and bringing different age groups and families together.

Omaha By Design also envisions sections of town creating their own improvement plans, as midtown is doing now with an initiative called Destination Midtown.

Ken Reitz, a west Omaha resident, said he sees potential for Omaha By Design to make a difference. Reitz himself got involved in urban design when he helped create a vision for a village-style development in downtown Millard.